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*Measuring the Impact of Travel
on Racial Prejudice of German
Tourists Visiting Turkey*

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MEASURING THE IMPACT OF TRAVEL ON RACIAL PREJUDICE OF GERMAN TOURISTS VISITING TURKEY

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Abstract

This study evaluated the impact of travel on racial prejudices of German tourists visiting Turkey, the only Muslim candidate state of the European Union. Moreover, the study attempted to compare and contrast a classical (overt) and a modern (covert) racial-prejudice-scale developed in Sweden. Further, the study will identify and profile homogeneous segments of travelers using this prejudice scale a basis for a factor-cluster analysis.

INTRODUCTION AND SETTING OF THE PROBLEM

Last Year, Turkey's application for becoming a full-member of the European community has been reluctantly accepted with a long list of must-do projects within the next 10-15 years. From the moment the Turkish campaign began, European leaders sought to signal Turkey was setting its sights too high, but Turkish negotiators continued to press their case, suggesting that Western prejudice against Muslim Turks was a hidden reason behind the European reluctance. Recent polls in almost all of the European countries suggest that the majority of the populations in these countries are against a full membership to the EU. Nevertheless, since all signed agreements require full membership based on Turkey's records toward accepting the EU standards in its social, political, military and environmental, and human rights issues, influential European leaders seem to push for the full membership of Turkey yet signaling their constituents an opposite view. At the end, what will make a difference is that the views of public at large much of which may be a product of prejudice.

A racial prejudice in Europe is not a new phenomenon; however, blatant racial hatred and intolerance manifested in attacks against immigrants

by a few extremist may not be reflective of collective emotional response of a larger population (Akrami, Ekrami, Ekehammar and Araya 2000). Although experts agree that overall a classical (overt) racist behavior is decline since the World War II, recent studies done among immigrant groups in Sweden for example have found that immigrant groups think that their host communities are indeed racists. A study by Lange in 1996 (cited in Akrami et al. 2000), for example, found that four major 70% of Africans, 36% of Arabs, 60% Asians and 51% ex-Yugoslavs believe that Sweden is a racist country. Accordingly, perceived discrimination or racial prejudice by these immigrant groups is a serious problem. Much of racist behavior is, however, covert (modern racism) because many people tend to respond in a politically and socially 'correct way' and thus reluctant to express their prejudice openly. Moreover, many countries legally sanction overt racist behavior. It appears that racism in a classical sense has disguised itself in much more emotionally subtle responses. Often times, negative response or reaction toward immigrants can be justified based on seemingly rational factors other than race. Last year's comments by ex-president of France, Mr. Giscard d'Estaing, who now heads of the European Convention on the Future of

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Europe, confirmed the impression that opposition to Turkey's candidacy has more to do with prejudice than with policy differences. The policy makers will have to listen to their constituents' feelings toward Turkey's membership. France's constitution requiring a public referendum on membership of new candidate countries is evidence that the road toward EU-membership is full of hardship.

US foreign policy involving Turkey's relationship with the EU has been that of full-membership of Turkey to the EU. The current and former administrations including the president(s) and the state department bureaucrats have used their influence to make sure that long term NATO ally Turkey's views are heard. US administration asserted consistently asserted that a full-membership of Turkey, the only Muslim country, would provide many benefits including that of preventing culture clash by bridging the Christian and Muslim cultures, help moderate Muslims in Turkey to hold on to the power and alliance with the West, and most importantly use Turkey as an example in the alienated Arab world. Thus, US foreign policy aims to create a favorable atmosphere for Turkey's membership to the EU.

There are many strategies available to a country (e.g., active media campaign, positive public relations campaign, positive roles assumed in international politics, student exchange programs, increased levels of cultural contact via travel and tourism). The major focus of this study, sponsored by the EU center of Texas A&M University, was to measure and understand the general levels of racial prejudice among the Germans visiting Turkey, the only Muslim candidate state of European community. The study further attempted to understand the impact of travel & tourism on racial attitudes of German tourists visiting Turkey.

A convenient sample of 365 German first-time travelers to Turkey completed a structured questionnaire measuring racial attitudes towards Turkey/Turkish people before and after their visit. A contact tour guide, along with other tour guides of a collaborating tour company helped collect data in the Mediterranean region of Turkey which is often times is described as the Turkish-Riviera. Overall, 500 all-inclusive tour participants were asked to fill

out a short form measuring their attitudes as soon as they got out of the Turkish customs before departure to their Hotel. A response rate of 73% was achieved which is an acceptable rate for similar studies. A longer form measuring various aspects of their travel including their racial attitudes was administered at the end of their vacation before departure from Turkey. A subsample of the group (~30 travelers) were later asked to participate to the second phase of the study, which was conducted via telephone interviews after 6-8 weeks of their return to their normal lives in Germany.

Table 1 displays the responses to all attitudinal items reflecting modern prejudicial scale. The frequency distribution of the responses to the scale indicates that only small proportion of the entire group has prejudicial tendencies. When analyzed individually, items seem to reflect a normal distribution to responses with majority of the participants trying not to disclosing their true feeling by checking the neutral position on the scale. If one were to ignore the response to neutral category, one would quickly see that there are an equal number of people asserting either way. Since the purpose of the study was not to assess general levels of prejudice among German traveling population to Turkey, rather to determine whether travel had any impact on racial attitudes toward the hosting Turkish community, we arrive to a surprising result. As opposed to the pre-study assumption that travel to a county would decrease travelers' prejudicial tendencies, the findings indicated that travel, in this instance with a prepackage tour, would increase those tendencies significantly. Table 2, indicates such outcome for eleven out of 17 scale items.

There is a danger in readily accepting the results of this study those German travelers' attitudes toward the hosting Turkish community is negatively affected because of their travel to Turkey. There might be other explanations for these findings: first, the nature of a prepackage group is such that it puts a lot of stress on both the travelers and the hosting tour companies; usually travelers are required to travel extensively from one site to another in a hurried manner with less than optimum conditions. Since prepackage tours are relatively inexpensive and involves no-frills type of experience, the tour companies rely on their clients

(tourists) extra purchases of locally developed goods such as carpets, jewelry and leather as a supplemental income. The clients are being guided to local shops where they spend quite a bit of time which might lead to dissatisfaction among those who are not in shopping mood. Thus, their responses may be biased because of their experiences with shopping. Having said this, one is reminded that most German travelers to Turkey come from low income classes and the nature of how the Turkish tourism product is being marketed to this market might play a role in explaining these findings. Bringing clients from relatively low-income, low-education class of a German society with a package tour may create group dynamics that would collectively enhance their negative responses. Qualitative comments by the tour guides indicated that there are always travelers who do make blatant racist comments either because of the already existing attitudes or due to travel circumstances imposed upon them via prepackaged tours. This might have an effect on the completion of survey instrument and how they evaluated the scale items.

However, regardless of this assumption there is a problem that Turkish tourism authorities and tour companies shall address. German travelers do not leave Turkey with good impressions. The Turkish product itself might be drawing already racist groups of travelers and their unsatisfactory experiences with their travel might enhance their already preconceived ideas about Turkish people. The study reported here was not based on a random sample which can be used to generalize the responses to a larger group. It would be unfair to assume that all German travelers respond in similar ways or change their attitudes as a result of their experiences with Turkey and Turkish culture. Within the context of this limited study, either wrong types of travelers are attracted or travelers' experiences are interfering with their emotional responses to some of the questions asked. To alleviate such biased outcome, more studies are needed of course to understand the group dynamics, the extent to which such cultural exchanges occur in such limited circumstance as in pre-packages, limited or no contact environment. An independent traveler who perhaps encounters local population in more relaxed non-commercial environment might change their negative preconceived ideas about Turkey and Turks.

Turkish authorities shall invest resources to understand traveling population's experiences with Turkish culture in order to design strategies that would help improve the public's image in Germany, especially when one considers the fact that most German travelers to Turkey with package tours are repeat travelers. Thus, creating an environment and travel experience that would challenge hard-core, overt racists' seemingly rational ideas about travel experiences would do well in creating good will and image among the German population at large. This in turn would help Turkey's bid for membership to the European community later. Such studies are also recommended for other member countries of course. Based on this study, one cannot dismiss the idea that tourism may contribute to peace and intercultural understanding and elimination of racial barriers among the peoples of various cultures, hence contributing to the elimination of covert (modern) racism among the people's of Europe.

REFERENCES

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Distribution of Post-trip Responses to Attitudinal Statements

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Nor	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Many Turks do not keep their homes tidy	Post -trip values	.6%	9.8%	44.0%	37.4%	8.3%
Many Turks do not take care of their personal hygiene	Post-trip values	.6	10.4	30.7	42.6	15.7
Turks are generally not very intelligent	Post-trip values	1.1	7.1	26.8	43.0	21.9
Many Turks hold negative attitudes toward women	Post-trip values	8.2	41.7	34.4	14.4	1.4
Discrimination against Turks is no longer a problem in Germany	Post-trip values	2.2	22.4	31.9	38.7	4.8
There have been enough programs designed to create jobs for immigrants like Turks in Germany	Post-trip values	1.4	14.0	50.6	25.8	8.1
Racist groups are no longer a threat toward immigrant Turks in Germany	Post-trip values	1.4	16.0	34.7	39.8	8.1
Immigrant Turks are getting too demanding in the push for equal rights	Post-trip values	4.0	24.6	50.0	19.8	1.7
In Germany, immigrant camps should be placed far out in the countryside away from large population centers	Post-trip values	1.9	8.9	30.3	45.3	13.6
Turks are generally honest people ^R	Post-trip values	5.1	45.6	44.5	3.7	1.1
Generally speaking, Turks have high moral principles ^R	Post-trip values	7.1	50.3	31.5	9.7	1.4
I favor full integration of Germans and Turks in Germany ^R	Post-trip values	10.6	36.3	36.3	11.2	5.6
It is easy to understand immigrant Turks' demands for equal rights in Germany ^R	Post-trip values	4.5	47.2	32.4	14.2	1.7
Immigrant Turks get too little attention in the German media. ^R	Post-trip values	.6	18.5	45.2	31.8	4.0
It is important to invest money in teaching Turks their mother tongue ^R	Post-trip values	4.2	27.0	33.7	27.6	7.5
At home, in Germany, special programs are needed to create jobs for Turks ^R	Post-trip values	2.9	20.2	34.1	29.5	13.3
A multicultural Germany would be good ^R	Post-trip values	6.8	36.9	34.9	18.2	3.1

^R items are reverse coded

Note: n = 345-360

Comparison of Pre-trip and Post-trip Attitudes

		Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	
Composite Index of Prejudice	Pre-trip values	46.75	5.548	-4.42	.000*
	Post-trip values	47.97	5.952		
Many Turks do not keep their homes tidy	Pre-trip values	2.57	.805	-5.99	.000*
	Post-trip values	2.90	.859		
Many Turks do not take care of their personal hygiene	Pre-trip values	2.38	.875	-5.35	.000*
	Post-trip values	2.70	.898		
Turks are generally not very intelligent	Pre-trip values	2.23	.933	-4.92	.000*
	Post-trip values	2.49	.874		
Many Turks hold negative attitudes toward women	Pre-trip values	3.39	.885	-.57	.570
	Post-trip values	3.43	.866		
Discrimination against Turks is no longer a problem in Germany	Pre-trip values	2.75	.899	-2.00	.046**
	Post-trip values	2.85	.890		
There have been enough programs designed to create jobs for immigrants like Turks in Germany	Pre-trip values	2.74	.829	-5.99	.000*
	Post-trip values	3.07	.813		
Racist groups are no longer a threat toward immigrant Turks in Germany	Pre-trip values	2.63	.868	-3.66	.000*
	Post-trip values	2.84	.920		
Immigrant Turks are getting too demanding in the push for equal rights	Pre-trip values	3.07	.814	-3.83	.000*
	Post-trip values	3.28	.809		
In Germany, immigrant camps should be placed far out in the countryside away from large population centers	Pre-trip values	2.43	.892	-3.11	.002*
	Post-trip values	2.58	.8478		

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		Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	
Turks are generally honest people ^R	Pre-trip values	3.52	.69373	-3.19	.002*
	Post-trip values	3.37	.73600		
Generally speaking, Turks have high moral principles ^R	Pre-trip values	3.53	.815	-1.35	.178
	Post-trip values	3.45	.837		
I favor full integration of Germans and Turks in Germany ^R	Pre-trip values	3.40	.984	-1.58	.115
	Post-trip values	3.31	.933		
It is easy to understand immigrant Turks' demands for equal rights in Germany ^R	Pre-trip values	3.42	.824	-1.08	.279
	Post-trip values	3.37	.899		
Immigrant Turks get too little attention in the German media. ^R	Pre-trip values	2.80	.789	.82	.412
	Post-trip values	2.85	.947		
It is important to invest money in teaching Turks their mother tongue ^R	Pre-trip values	2.92	.989	-.91	.364
	Post-trip values	2.87	.988		
At home, in Germany, special programs are needed to create jobs for Turks ^R	Pre-trip values	2.71	1.044	3.14	.002*
	Post-trip values	2.90	.908		
A multicultural Germany would be good ^R	Pre-trip values	3.24	.922	.47	.637
	Post-trip values	3.27	.896		

^R items are reverse coded

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